

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**National Register of Historic Places Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of PropertyHistoric name: Mother Waldron PlaygroundOther names/site number: TMK (1)(1)2-1-051:003, :005, :006, Coral Street right-of-way between Pohukaina and Halekauwila streetsName of related multiple property listing: N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. LocationStreet & number: 537 Coral Street/Bounded by Coral, Halekauwila, Pohukaina, and Cooke streetsCity or town: Honolulu State: Hawaii County: HonoluluNot For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___national ___statewide ___local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___A ___B ___C ___D

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ___ entered in the National Register
___ determined eligible for the National Register
___ determined not eligible for the National Register
___ removed from the National Register
___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private: ☐
Public – Local ☒
Public – State ☒
Public – Federal ☐

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s) ☐
District ☐
Site ☒

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT

Moderne

Art Deco

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: CONCRETE, ASPHALT, STONE

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

Mother Waldron Playground is an urban playground that is bounded by Halekauwila, Cooke, Pohukaina, and Coral streets. It was constructed in 1937 on a 1.76 acre (77,000 square feet) site in the Kakaako district of Honolulu, Hawaii. It has been substantially altered from its original design since its initial construction. Built elements within the park include a comfort station and remaining portions of a low wall that encompassed the original park. The built components contain design elements of the Art Moderne and Art Deco styles, including an emphasis on horizontality, rounded corners and piers, and streamlined appearance. Mother Waldron Playground has undergone several major alterations since its initial construction, including removal and replacement of some of the park's original features, and subsequent expansions to compensate for other changes. The playground's setting just southeast of downtown Honolulu has transitioned from a mixed residential, commercial, and industrial area at the time of the park's construction into a major light industrial area now being redeveloped into a mixed-use district.

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Narrative Description

Architectural and Landscape Description

The playground has a rectangular footprint and is divided into two halves: a large, southeast sod-filled area and a northwest paved area with an oval sodded center surrounded by a perimeter wall. A centrally located comfort station and low wall divides the two halves. Additional green space adjacent to the park is created by Coral Street's closure to vehicular traffic. The paved area, comprised of the northwest and southeast perimeter walls, benches, comfort station, and covered walkways, are original to the playground's 1937 construction date. Asphalt paving, the southeast sodded area, and northeast and southwest walls are 1990s additions and alterations.

Northwest, Paved Area

The paved area is the original section of the park. It contains low walls, benches, a comfort station, and covered walkways—all constructed of concrete brick. The brick has been painted tan throughout the park.

The paved area's hardscaping consists largely of asphalt. Sandstone flagstone is used below the covered walkways and in the area in front of the comfort station's northwest, Coral Street elevation. The round elevated platform on the northwest elevation is paved with the same flagstone. Northwest of this comfort station is an oval, grassy area. At the opening to Coral Street, the same sandstone flagstone is used and surrounded on either side by asphalt. Softscape features include Monkeypod and Royal Poinciana trees that are found within the paved area as well as along the Coral Street perimeter wall. The paved area on the park's southwest, Pohukaina Street end contains two volleyball courts and one basketball court. The paved area on the park's northeast, Halekauwila Street end contains small playground equipment. Clay brick is used to border the sidewalk outside and around the paved park as well as provide paving at each entrance to the park.

Walls

Mother Waldron Playground's paved area is surrounded by an approximately three foot high perimeter wall. The wall is approximately nine inches thick. Along Coral Street, this wall zig-zags forming triangular points and provides a wide opening into the park. This wall is original and composed of concrete bricks; the playground's original features are constructed using the same concrete brick. On the park's northeast and southwest sides, the walls form rectangular zig-zags. Of these wall sections, neither are in their original locations nor contain original materials. The entire perimeter wall on Coral, Halekauwila, and Pohukaina streets is divided into three sections separated by two rows of recessed brick. The middle section of wall is perforated with alternating vertical and horizontal openings. Concrete coping on top of the wall consists of alternating zig-zag and straight edges and is slightly recessed from the wall's edges. These zig-zags hint at modest Art Deco stylistic influences, though the low wall expresses heavy

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influence from the streamlined, Art Moderne style. Three of the wall's four corners are cued with entrances into the park from the sidewalk. These entrances are anchored on either side by rounded piers. Rounded piers are also found on the park side of Coral Street's zig-zag wall junctures. The southeast corner of the perimeter wall at Halekauwila Street is squared, does not allow access into the park, and is not original.

A lower, one foot high wall capped with terracotta tile extends along the paved area's southeast border. This low wall connects to the higher wall at Halekauwila Street, connects to benches at the comfort station, then continues on the southwest side of the comfort station before turning toward the open grassy area of the park and terminating.

Benches

Benches within Mother Waldron Playground are found in the alcoves created by the perimeter wall as well as in the middle of the park. These seating areas are fixed, permanent, built-in park fixtures. Along Coral Street, six triangular alcoves are filled with curved benches, whereas straight benches are found along Halekauwila and Pohukaina streets and the low wall separating the paved and grassy areas. The curved benches are original while the straight benches along Halekauwila and Pohukaina streets are not original. Two straight benches are found in the middle of the paved area and are original to the playground. Curved benches are located beneath the comfort station's curved covered walkways, separating the paved area from the grassy area. The vertical faces of the benches are inclined so that the seat is wider than the base. Benches are capped with the same terracotta tile found on the park's low wall.

Comfort Station

The comfort station, constructed of concrete brick, consists of a rectangular building flanked on either side by a curved covered walkway and displays influences of the streamlined, Art Moderne form and style. Two rows of recessed concrete brick form horizontal lines which extend across all of the building's facades at the water table and roofline. The covered walkways' curves follow along the paved area's central grassy oval. The comfort station is single-story, low and horizontal, with a flat roof capped with zig-zag coping identical to that found on the perimeter walls.

At the comfort station's northwest elevation, a central alcove lined with vertical pilasters forms the backdrop of a round, elevated platform. On either side of this alcove are finished openings with vertical concrete grilles. The recessed row near the roofline intersects with the covered walkways' curved, flat roof. These covered walkways are supported by round columns with a horizontal band of recessed brick at the same level as the recessed brick at the comfort station's water table. The covered walkways' flat roofs project slightly over the piers. Where the covered walkways intersect with the northwest elevation, a curved wall supports the walkway's roof and attaches to the building facade. These walls also help shield the entrances to the restrooms from public view.

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At the comfort station's northeast and southwest elevations are open entrances to men's and women's restrooms. Drinking fountains are found in small oval alcoves near the entrances. Above the restroom entrances, the covered walkways' roofs intersect with the recessed row of brick near the roofline. On both the northeast and southwest elevations, covered walkway columns abut the comfort station. On the side of each abutting covered walkway column is one small window identical to those found on the comfort station's northwest elevation.

At the building's southeast elevation, a small room projects from the center of the building. A small semi-circular roof projects from the top row of recessed brick to cover the entrance to the small room. The entrance is found on the southwest side and is shielded from view by a short wall resembling the park's perimeter wall. This wall shares the same coping as the perimeter walls but is not perforated and contains no rows of recessed concrete brick. The projecting room's southeast elevation also contains no recessed brick at the water table level. On the projecting room's northeast and southeast elevations are two large vent openings covered by a metal grate. Four windows identical to those on the comfort station's northwest elevation are found on the southeast elevation, two on either side of the projecting room.

The comfort station's interior consists of two nearly-identical restrooms. Both contain one sink, several stalls, and a partially-enclosed changing area. The men's room contains a single urinal. The interior concrete walls and stall dividers are clad with white tile to the height of the stall walls. Above the tile the walls are painted. The stall doors are wood. The restroom floors are concrete. Although no plans for the comfort station interior were found, these interiors likely coincide with the comfort station's 1968 renovations.

Cook Street Sodded Area

In 1991-1992, a rectangular sodded parcel was added to the southeast side of Mother Waldron Playground following the realignment of Halekauwila Street. Bound by Halekauwila Street, Cooke Street, Pohukaina Street and the original 1937 playground, this area contains no buildings, walls, benches, paving, or playground equipment. A brick, almond-shaped grave marker enclosed by a cast iron fence that has been erected on the east side of the parcel. This marker is labeled *kapu*. *Kapu* means "forbidden" or "sacred," and the marker encircles an area where human remains were reinterred following Kakaako improvement projects in the 1990s. Royal Poinciana trees line the grassy area along Cooke Street with monkeypod trees clustered at the tree line's ends.

Coral Street Right-of-Way

The northwest area of the playground was added to the park around 1994-1995.¹ The area, formerly a portion of Coral Street, was closed between Halekauwila and Pohukaina streets following the completion of the 1991-1992 street realignment project. At both the northeast and southwest ends of the former Coral Street area, trees were planted. Grass replaced the street

¹ Letter from Michael N. Scarfone, Executive Director, Hawaii Community Development Authority, to Dona L. Hanaike, Director, Department of Parks and Recreation, December 14, 1994.

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pavement, but a small rectangular section of pavement remains near the former Coral Street entrance to Mother Waldron Playground.

Alterations

Mother Waldron Playground has undergone major changes since its original construction. According to its Hawaii Register of Historic Places nomination form, completed in 1988, initial changes included renovations to the comfort station in 1968 and resurfacing the area in 1978. At that time, the park was bounded by Lana Lane on its southeast border. The large sodded area now a part of the park contained commercial, residential, and industrial buildings for the majority of the playground's history.

In the 1980s, the Hawaii Community Development Authority (HCDA) began plans to help revitalize the industrial Kakaako area. Included in these community development plans were road reconfigurations aimed at improving Kakaako traffic patterns. In 1991-1992, the HCDA changed the alignment of Halekauwila Street.. This realignment of Halekauwila Street required a taking of approximately 12,700 square feet of Mother Waldron Playground on the playground's northeast end which reduced the park acreage by seventeen percent (17%).² To reduce the impact of the playground's diminished size, the developed area southeast of Lana Lane was removed. Lana Lane, separating the playground from the developed area, was also removed. Mother Waldron Playground was subsequently enlarged by approximately 54,000 square feet southeast.³ Although this 54,000 square foot area was officially designated for future use as part of Mother Waldron Playground, Coral Street's closure on the park's northwest side was never officially considered part of the park until the mid-1990s when improvements were made to the former Coral Street area. This final change to Mother Waldron Playground's boundaries enlarged the park by an additional 25,800 square feet.

As a result of the taking, the northeast end of the playground lost its basketball court, perimeter wall, and benches. A perimeter wall and benches nearly identical to the original were reconstructed along Halekauwila Street, but the wall now connects to the original low wall topped by terracotta tile that remains extant; the tile was not used on the replacement wall. There is no longer a convex curved entrance at the original playground's Halekauwila Street and Lana Lane corner due to the alterations. The original court and play area has been replaced with modern playground equipment.

Along Pohukaina Street, road widening related to district improvements forced the perimeter wall and benches to be removed and reconstructed approximately five to ten feet inside the playground's original boundary. To open Mother Waldron Playground to its newly-acquired 54,000 square feet southeast, a higher wall running along Lana Lane and intersecting with the rear of the comfort station was removed. The original handball court was also removed.

² Documentation completed in 1985 stated that 8,400 square feet of Mother Waldron Playground would be removed due to Halekauwila Street's realignment; however, following realignment, plat maps indicate approximately 12,700 square feet was removed.

³ State of Hawaii, et al., *Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the Kakaako Community Development District Plan* (Honolulu: Hawaii Community Development Authority, 1985), IV-45.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- ☐ A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- ☐ B. Removed from its original location
- ☐ C. A birthplace or grave
- ☐ D. A cemetery
- ☐ E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- ☐ F. A commemorative property
- ☐ G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

SOCIAL HISTORY

ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION

ARCHITECTURE

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1937 – 1945

Significant Dates

1937

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Bent, Harry Sims

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Mother Waldron Playground is an urban park in Honolulu, Hawaii, which is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. It is significant under Criterion A in the area of social history and entertainment/recreation for its association with the organized play and playground movement in the United States during the early twentieth century, and under Criterion C in the areas of architecture and landscape architecture for its Art Moderne and Art Deco playground design influences. The period of significance spans from 1937, when construction commenced, until 1945, when the playground movement that supported supervised play largely ceased and Honolulu's Board of Parks and Recreation was formed to rehabilitate Oahu's parks following World War II.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Historical Narrative

Hawaii History

Early History

Polynesian settlers arrived in the isolated and uninhabited Hawaiian Islands as early as 300 A.D., with subsequent migrations taking place from the eleventh century through fourteenth century. Traversing the Pacific Ocean, these settlers brought with them a traditional land-based management system comprised of chiefs and commoners, as well as staple crops like wild ginger, gourds, taro, sugarcane, coconut, and sweet potato. A distinct Hawaiian culture evolved over time, celebrating unique stories and deities, and keeping order through a *kapu* governance system based on a strict code of conduct. By the time captain James Cook came to the islands in 1778, the islands' population was estimated as high as 300,000. Captain Cook named the islands the Sandwich Islands in honor of the Earl of Sandwich.⁴

Hawaiian Kingdom

Originally existing as a collection of independently ruled kingdoms, the Hawaiian Islands were united as a single kingdom in 1810 by King Kamehameha I. Repeated and frequent contact with Western sailing vessels gave the king access to weaponry which enabled him to defeat his rivals.

⁴ Edward Joesting, *Hawaii: An Uncommon History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1972), 13, 15, 27.

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Early traders to the islands brought diseases that decimated the local population. Whalers soon arrived to take advantage of Hawaii's central Pacific location for commerce and gathering needed supplies. The king's death in 1819 led to the *kapu* system's end, though outside influence began to initiate the old system as early as 1804. Missionaries arriving by 1823 brought Christianity and a written language to the islands. The Hawaiian Kingdom, recognized as a sovereign nation, entered into treaties with foreign nations, and the first such treaty with the United States took place in 1826. In 1840, the Kingdom of Hawaii promulgated its first constitution, creating a government structure that included a representative body. Foreigners, especially Westerners, immigrating to the islands brought changes to Hawaii's economic structure and profited from its lands and ideal trade route location. Sugarcane's rise as Hawaii's staple crop increased demand for labor, saw further demand for workers, bringing immigrants from across the world to Hawaii.

Annexation

By 1885, a group of non-native businessmen formed the Hawaiian League and began planning Hawaii annexation. The group pressured King Kalakaua to sign the Bayonet Constitution which stripped much of the king's authority and transferring it to a legislature comprised of a Hawaiian League majority. The king relented and signed the document on July 6, 1887. In 1891 Queen Liliuokalani assumed the throne and unsuccessfully attempted to repeal the Bayonet Constitution. This power struggle resulted in the Hawaiian League's overthrow of the monarchy. A coup d'état was facilitated with the assistance of United States Minister to Hawaii John L. Stevens and United States troops. Hearing of the overthrow, President Grover Cleveland ordered an investigation and called for the reestablishment of Hawaii's monarchy. Hawaii's Provisional Government instead pushed for United States annexation but failed to receive the required two-thirds vote in the United States Senate.

When William McKinley became president in 1897, Hawaii's annexation became a priority. The 1898 Joint Resolution annexed strategically located Hawaii during Spanish-American War, and the 1900 Hawaiian Organic Act officially made Hawaii a United States territory. Although many residents continued to disapprove of or resist United States governance during the early territorial years, Hawaii eventually became the fiftieth state in 1959.

Kakaako

The Kakaako district is situated between Honolulu and Waikiki on Oahu. The area long existed as swampland, and during the reign of King Kamehameha I, was used for fishing, landing canoes, producing salt, cultivating taro, and practicing religion. Although Honolulu Harbor experienced rapid growth through the 1800s, few lived in Kakaako during this time. In 1848 much of Hawaii's lands were turned over to private ownership in what was called the Great Mahele; the land in Kakaako became part of the Bernice Pauahi Bishop estate.

Kakaako's lack of development also led the area to become the location of a temporary smallpox quarantine hospital and settlement during a 1853 smallpox epidemic. By 1876 however, a government map of Oahu labeled the area as the "Kakaako Salt Works" with no major roads

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passing through the area. Roads between Honolulu and Waikiki bypassed Kakaako to the north. The identification of leprosy in Hawaii during the mid-nineteenth century eventually led to the construction in 1881 of a lepers' hospital in Kakaako at what is now Coral Street and Ala Moana Boulevard. Aimed to keep leprosy infections at a minimum, the hospital was used largely to house suspected lepers and isolate them from the local population before being sent to the lepers' colony on Molokai. Acting as only a branch of its larger Kalihi operation, the hospital was closed in 1888, dismantled, and materials reused on Molokai.⁵

Maps indicate Kakaako was the location of an early immigration depot constructed prior to 1887, with a new immigration depot constructed near the former lepers' hospital in 1889.⁶ Kakaako was also the location of a saluting battery constructed in 1887. The battery was later enlarged to become Fort Armstrong in 1907 which included the Battery Tiernon in 1911. Honolulu Iron Works also operated near Kakaako, establishing a presence in the mid-nineteenth century and operating until 1973. The iron works grew hand-in-hand with Hawaii's sugar industry, building machinery required for plantation operations. As the industry declined, so did the Honolulu Iron Works, eventually leading to its closure and complete demolition by 1982.⁷

Continued growth in Honolulu eventually forced Kakaako's transition from a sparsely populated industrial area into a densely populated residential and commercial district. Demand for land near Honolulu Harbor led to the filling and development of a shallow reef adjacent to Kakaako, expanding the land comprising Kakaako. Eventually, large tracts of Kakaako land held by the Bishop and Curtis Perry Ward estates were subdivided. With the Honolulu Iron Works and Hawaiian Tuna Packers establishing businesses in Kakaako, other small enterprises soon followed. Residents arrived quickly. Hawaiian, Japanese, Portuguese, Filipino, and Puerto Rican families all found a home in Kakaako. Largely residing within their own housing "camps," these varied cultural groups lived and worked side-by-side in Kakaako, creating what has been referred to as a microcosm of Hawaii.⁸

Originally located at the site of the current Hawaii State Public Library, the Pohukaina School for Girls relocated to Kakaako in 1913. The new school was viewed as centrally located for its students and provided more space for buildings and playgrounds. Over time, the school became a special education facility and later closed in 1980.⁹

By the mid-twentieth century, however, Kakaako's population began to decline as residential areas slowly transitioned to Kakaako's current industrial uses. The area also fell into disrepair, and efforts were made by the Hawaii Community Development Authority (HCDA) to improve

⁵ Cultural Surveys Hawaii, Inc., Final Archaeological Assessment of the Proposed Halekauwila Place Project, Kakaako, Honolulu District, Oahu Island (Kailua, HI: 2009).

⁶ Oahu Government Survey 1876, Registered Map No. 1380 (Hawaii Land Survey Division); Wall, W. A., Honolulu and Vicinity 1887, Hawaiian Government Survey (Library of Congress).

⁷ Cultural Surveys Hawaii, Inc., Final Archaeological Assessment (2009).

⁸ Marsha Gibson, *Kaka'ako As We Knew It* (Honolulu: Mutual Publishing, 2011).

⁹ Cultural Surveys Hawaii, Inc., Final Archaeological Assessment (2009).

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roadway infrastructure within Kakaako, including realignment of Halekauwila Street.¹⁰ Future plans for Kakaako include increased residential housing units, repopulating an area that was once a thriving community.

The Playground Movement

Beginning on the United States mainland during the late nineteenth century, the playground movement developed out of concern for the poor, aiming to help shape children and young adults into law-abiding citizens. Hired playground directors organized activities at the playgrounds and instilled a sense of order to the parks. This early urban reform movement was also seen as a means to help recent immigrants assimilate into American culture. The earliest playgrounds were developed by private investors who built these spaces for public use in the 1880s. In the following decades, cities took a greater role in providing public playgrounds and recreation areas for their residents. In 1906 the Playground Association of America was formed to promote physical and mental well-being through playgrounds across the country. The organization sent members to assess select cities' particular recreational needs. By the 1930s, many cities had created full-fledged recreation departments to deal with recreation management and operations.

Playgrounds were not places where children played freely on their own. Play existed for healthy development, and also as an educational tool that required organization and supervision. Thus, playground directors were employed to monitor the children's activities and acted as role models. The directors helped organize team games, scheduled activities, and restricted playground access to bullies. Through their various activities, playgrounds and recreation centers were seen as alternative choices to youth gangs, delinquency, or wasted time.¹¹

Following World War II, the playground movement largely ceased, as child development experts began recommending unstructured play as more beneficial to child development. Supervised play at parks and playgrounds as it existed prior to the war subsequently ended.

Playground Movement in Honolulu

Honolulu's public playground development followed the national pattern and was promoted early on by the women leaders of the Free Kindergarten and Children's Aid Association. The group established the first public playground in Chinatown at Beretania and Smith streets in 1911. This playground was followed by Kamamalu and Atkinson parks in 1916 and Aala Park in 1917. Over the years, the organization functioned as Honolulu's de facto recreation department until the city's Recreation Commission was created in 1922 through the efforts of Henry Stoddard Curtis. Curtis, a former secretary of the Playground Association of America, surveyed Honolulu and urged the city to create new parks and playgrounds. His 1915 book

¹⁰ State of Hawaii, et al., *Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for the Kakaako Community Development District Plan* (Honolulu: Hawaii Community Development Authority, 1985); Austin, Tsutsumi, and Associates, Inc., *Kakaako Traffic Study* (Honolulu: Hawaii Community Development Authority, 1991).

¹¹ Robert R Weyeneth and Ann K. Yoklavich, *1930s Parks and Playgrounds in Honolulu: an Historical and Architectural Assessment* (Honolulu: Department of Parks and Recreation, 1987).

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Education though Play played an influential role nationwide emphasizing the inherent social value playgrounds and parks played in the lives of the country's children. Curtis also suggested a park on the Kalia wetlands; this would later become Ala Moana Park.

Honolulu established a park board in 1931, hired Harry Sims Bent as park architect in 1933, and by 1936, forty playgrounds and social centers had been built and were supervised by the Recreation Commission. Because the idea of supervised and organized play was fairly new, the Commission published a guide in the 1930s aimed at explaining the concept to its playground directors and the public at large. Along with physical exercise, playgrounds and parks provided a means for mental exercise, team-building, and a desire to "strive for high ideals."¹²

Following World War II, in 1946 Honolulu's Parks Board merged with the Recreation Commission to form the Board of Public Parks and Recreation. The new board was tasked with rehabilitating Oahu's damaged parks.¹³ By the end of the 1940s, American playgrounds began turning their focus to playground equipment aimed at promoting free play and imagination rather than supervised play as had been supported by recreation leaders during the previous two decades.¹⁴

New Deal Involvement in Playground Construction

Much of Honolulu's explosive growth in park, playground, and recreational facilities, including Mother Waldron Playground, can be attributed to increased federal assistance from New Deal programs in response to the Great Depression. Both the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA) and the Civil Works Administration (CWA) provided manpower for Honolulu's park construction initiative. The National Youth Administration (NYA) allowed Honolulu to employ playground directors, while additional manpower, including that used to construct Mother Waldron Playground, was provided by the Works Progress Administration (WPA).

The WPA was established in 1935 as part of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal policies. Lasting for eight years, WPA aimed to create labor-intensive projects with low-cost materials. "Small useful projects" as Executive Order 7034 stated, described the purpose of the WPA. No WPA requirements existed for local project financing, but in 1936, project sponsors averaged about 10% of the costs, and by the 1940s, that number had increased to 30%. In Honolulu, local funding accounted for 64% of the total cost of Mother Waldron Playground, with the WPA providing the remaining amount in addition to labor.¹⁵

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ann K. Yoklavich, *Overview of Historic Honolulu Parks* (Honolulu: Department of Parks and Recreation, 1987), 4.

¹⁴ Susan G. Solomon, *American Playgrounds: Revitalizing Community Space* (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2005), 22.

¹⁵ Honolulu Star-Bulletin, "Playground to Open Monday" September 13, 1937.

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Early on, WPA projects focused on infrastructure needs like roads, electricity in rural areas, water, sanitation, and flood control. The 1936 Emergency Relief Appropriations Act added new categories that included public buildings, parks, public utilities, airports, and transit facilities, as well as educational, professional, and women's projects. WPA was prohibited from building on private property and was required to make sure its projects did not become private property.

The WPA's projects varied and included promenades, band shells, parks, waterfront areas developed for recreation, and multi-use recreation centers. During its existence, the WPA added 1,668 parks and improved some 6,524 existing parks, built 900 swimming pools, 9,300 recreational buildings and gymnasiums, 1,200 skating rinks, and 12,800 playgrounds. Across the country, Americans enjoyed the results of this program for decades.¹⁶

Harry Sims Bent

Harry Sims Bent, Mother Waldron Playground's architect, was born in Socorro, New Mexico, in 1896. After graduating from the University of Pennsylvania, Bent began his career working for the prominent New York architectural firm of Bertram Goodhue Associates. Bent's early work consisted primarily of building projects in the Los Angeles, California area, including the Los Angeles Central Library and several buildings at the California Institute of Technology (CalTech).

In the late 1920s Bent arrived in Honolulu assigned the task of supervising construction of the Academy of Arts as a representative and "resident architect" from Bertram Goodhue Associates. Following the Academy of Art's completion, Bent remained in Hawaii, first acquiring work through Bertram Goodhue Associates then later for his own independent practice.

Bent originally volunteered his time working on plans for the Honolulu Park Board in the early-1930s, and ultimately worked on nearly all projects undertaken by the Board through 1939. He was considered one of the most talented architects in Hawaii in the late 1920s-1930s, with Bertram Goodhue Associates and independent works including the C. Brewer Building, Hanahauoli School, the Pineapple Research Institute at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, and several residences.¹⁷

Bent's first task for the Honolulu Park Board was the Ala Moana Park project in 1933. The park's designed features included the canal bridge, entrance portals, sports pavilion, banyan court, and lawn bowling green. Other Bent park projects included Mother Waldron Playground, Kawananakoa Playground, Ala Wai Clubhouse, the Haleiwa Beach Park structures, and the Lanakila Park comfort station. Utilizing popular Art Moderne and Art Deco design elements, he aimed to create a modern look for his park work, a break from typical park and playground design. Bent incorporated these contemporary design aesthetics into his park plans, while earlier, non-Bent playground examples addressed the functional aspects of play.

¹⁶ Leighninger, Robert D., Jr., *Long-Range Public Investment: The Forgotten Legacy of the New Deal*, Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press (2007).

¹⁷ Steve Salis, "Playful Architecture," *Hawaii Architect* (June 1985): 12-13.

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Bent returned to the mainland around 1940, and settled in Pasadena, California, where he continued his landscape design work. Major works during his post-Hawaii period included the landscape plan for Hancock Park in Los Angeles and the master plan for the Los Angeles County Arboretum. Bent died in Pasadena on March 19, 1959.

Margaret "Mother" Waldron

Margaret "Mother" Waldron was born on August 12, 1873, in Honolulu of mixed Hawaiian and Irish heritage. Her career began at Pohukaina School where she taught the fourth grade. Mother Waldron's time outside of school was spent as a volunteer playground director at Atkinson Park, formerly located southwest of Mother Waldron Playground, and as a welfare worker in Kakaako. Her duties included coaching boys' football and baseball and teaching girls and women household duties and jam-making.

For her fiftieth birthday, the boys and girls of Kakaako gave Mother Waldron a pin bearing the word "mother." The pin became Mother Waldron's most prized possession. Mother Waldron was credited with nearly single-handedly ridding Kakaako of its gangs and turning their members into model citizens through her organized activities for the district's youth. She helped transform the district's unpleasant reputation and would be greeted with "Aloha Mother" throughout Kakaako.¹⁸

Margaret Waldron died at St. Francis Hospital on May 8, 1936, and was buried on May 10, Mother's Day that year, in Nuuanu Cemetery.¹⁹

Mother Waldron Playground

Mother Waldron Playground was originally a 1.76 acre site bounded by Coral, Halekauwila, and Pohukaina streets and Lana Lane on a parcel that the 1914 Sanborn Fire Insurance map noted contained the City and County Stables. Honolulu acquired the parkland in 1930 and 1931 through purchases and deeds from the Territory of Hawaii. After several years, the Park Board approved and implemented Harry Sims Bent's plans for the playground in 1936. WPA labor was used to construct the park and concrete bricks were the chosen material. The choice of concrete brick by Bent contrasted with his earlier use of "boulder concrete," a concrete he employed at Ala Moana Park and later Haleiwa Beach Park that relied on larger rubble and coral to decrease the amount of cement required.²⁰

The site of the future playground was proposed to be named in 1930 for Margaret "Mother" Waldron, but she refused the honor.²¹ Her name was given to the park following her death in 1936. Costing approximately \$50,000 to construct, Mother Waldron Playground opened

¹⁸ "Guava Class at Kakaako is Waldron Plan," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, February 27, 1930, 4.

¹⁹ "Death Claims Mrs. Waldron, Friend of Poor," *Honolulu Advertiser*, May 8, 1936, 1.

²⁰ Salis, "Playful Architecture," 12-13.

²¹ "Playground Given Name of Pioneer," *Honolulu Advertiser*, February 19, 1930, 1.

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September 20, 1937 to much fanfare, including a performance by the Royal Hawaiian Band.²²

Although the playground was separated by Coral Street from the nearby Pohukaina School, during recess children at the school were allowed to play at the park.

For the Kakaako community, Mother Waldron Playground played a much greater role. Each July, a *Bon* Dance would be held at the playground. Although the *Bon* Dance was a festival for Buddhists honoring deceased relatives, the entire Kakaako community would participate. Festivals like the *Bon* Dance were held continually at Mother Waldron Playground, providing a central location for socializing and entertainment in the Kakaako community. The playground also hosted a number of political rallies usually accompanied by musicians, bands, and hula dancers.²³

Original Appearance of Mother Waldron Playground

Bent planned the playground following his successful design features at Ala Moana Park, implementing contemporary design elements reflecting the Art Moderne style. The symmetrical playground, situated in a dense residential, commercial, and industrial area, was designed to emphasize utility as well as beauty. Bent used concrete bricks to construct Mother Waldron Playground's walls, benches, and comfort station.

A perimeter wall delineated the playground boundaries along Coral, Pohukaina, and Halekauwila streets and Lana Lane. The wall contained horizontal and vertical perforated openings and was comprised of several brick courses, with some courses recessed to create horizontal bands. Each of the park's corners contained a convex curve entry with rounded piers anchoring the walls' ends. Along Coral Street, the wall was executed in a triangular zig-zag form and opened to Coral Street, while Halekauwila and Pohukaina streets provided squared zig-zag walls. Lana Lane's wall was straight and contained no horizontal bands or perforations. The entire perimeter wall was topped by recessed concrete coping with alternating straight and zig-zag edges.

Laid out symmetrically, the park's northeast end was to be used by younger children while the southwest end was to be used by older children. An oval, grassy area and comfort station divided the two halves at the playground's center. The park utilized an Art Moderne style that was increasing in popularity during the time, yet seldom used for parks and playgrounds. Both sides contained volleyball, basketball, and shuffleboard courts. The northeast end contained swings and seesaws, while the southwest end contained handball courts.

Bent's central Art Moderne feature was a comfort station that employed a streamlined and unornamented facade, rounded corners and columns, and covered walkways curving away from the comfort station. The comfort station contained men's and women's restrooms, drinking fountains at the entrances of both restrooms, and changing areas inside. At the comfort station's center, a raised and rounded platform provided an outdoor stage area with a pilaster-lined alcove

²² "Waldron Playground—Kakaako Beauty Spot," *Honolulu Advertiser*, September 20, 1937, 5; "Playground to Open Monday," *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, September 13, 1937, 12; "\$50,000 Mother Waldron Park Officially Opened," *Honolulu Advertiser*, September 21, 1937, 1.

²³ Gibson, *Kakaako As We Knew It*, 85-87.

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backdrop. The stage, its surrounding area, and floor beneath the covered walkway were paved with the same sandstone flagstone found at the park's Coral Street entrance.

Concrete brick park benches capped with terracotta tile are located within the perimeter wall in alcoves created by the wall's zig-zag as well as in the middle of each play area. Most benches are straight, but the benches along the Coral Street wall curved to fit their alcoves. An additional low wall topped with terracotta was located beneath the comfort station's covered walkway, running parallel to the higher wall along Lana Lane. Trees were planted in openings created by the perimeter wall's zig-zag, providing shade to the park's users.²⁴

Mother Waldron Playground's Use of Contemporary Architectural Styles

Harry Sims Bent's design for Mother Waldron Playground reflected heavy influence from the streamlined Art Moderne style popular at the time. Art Moderne was characterized by horizontal lines, flat roofs, smooth surfaces, and curvilinear edges. The Art Moderne movement, popular from the 1930s through 1940s, and its counterpart, Art Deco, popular from the 1920s through 1940s, were seen as a rejection of classical architectural themes. Unlike Art Moderne's emphasis on horizontality, Art Deco utilized vertical lines and geometric patterns. Both design styles embraced architectural elements deemed appropriate for the modern era. Bent was inspired by these national architectural trends, and desired to create a playground that was viewed as a contemporary design expression, moving beyond mere utility.²⁵ Mother Waldron Playground presents a local, vernacular interpretation of these styles.

Changes to Mother Waldron Playground

According to the 1988 Hawaii Register of Historic Places nomination form that included Mother Waldron Playground, renovations were made to Mother Waldron Playground's comfort station in 1968. The form did not state the extent of the renovations, but a visual inspection indicated that no substantial alterations had occurred, as many original features and finishes remained intact. Additionally, the Department of Parks and Recreation resurfaced the playground in 1978.²⁶ In 1991-1992, Halekauwila Street was realigned through Mother Waldron Playground, removing approximately 12,700 square feet of the original park's northeast end and a small portion along Pohukaina Street. To mitigate this taking, the city added approximately 54,000 square feet of Mother Waldron Playground and removed Lana Lane which greatly enlarged the park. The expansion included extending the park southeast of downtown Honolulu, removing the park's boundary wall along Lana Lane, and reconstructing the park's perimeter walls along Halekauwila and Pohukaina streets.²⁷ In 1994-1995, Coral Street was closed between Halekauwila and Pohukaina streets and right-of-way included in the expansion of Mother Waldron Playground, which added approximately 25,800 square feet to the park. These

²⁴ Research did not provide the specific varieties of trees originally planted at Mother Waldron Playground.

²⁵ Weyeneth and Yoklavich, *1930s Parks and Playgrounds in Honolulu*, 16.

²⁶ Mother Waldron Playground, City & County of Honolulu Art Deco Parks Hawaii Register of Historic Places nomination form, April 20, 1988.

²⁷ See above Architectural and Landscape Description: Alterations.

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additions are now considered non-contributing sites within the greater Mother Waldron Playground site. The surrounding neighborhood's transition to light industrial uses provides little context for the playground, as proximate buildings are not original to the park's construction era.

Prior Documentation of Mother Waldron Playground

Mother Waldron Playground was listed in the Hawaii Register of Historic Places on June 9, 1988, as an element of the thematic group "City & County of Honolulu Art Deco Parks," prior to the extensive 1990s changes.

The playground was documented on a Determination of Eligibility form by Mason Architects, Inc. in 2008. This documentation assessed the property as eligible for listing in the National Register under Criteria A and C and the Hawaii State Historic Preservation Division (SHPD) concurred with this finding.

This nomination has been produced as part of the legal requirements in the *Programmatic Agreement Among the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Transit Administration, The Hawaii State Historic Preservation Officer, The United States Navy, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation Regarding the Honolulu High-Capacity Transit Corridor Project in the City and County of Honolulu, Hawaii*.²⁸

Information produced from research conducted for this nomination revealed that substantial changes had occurred in the playground in the 1990s which were not described in the 2008 Determination of Eligibility form. This nomination considers those changes.

Significance Evaluation

Mother Waldron Playground is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the national playground movement, which aimed to provide supervised play and character-molding opportunities. The property correlates with the rise of playground construction in urban areas throughout the United States.

Mother Waldron Playground is not eligible under Criterion B. Although the park is named in honor of Margaret "Mother" Waldron, the property is not associated with her productive life or her lasting contributions to the Kakaako community.

This property is also eligible under Criterion C for its architectural and landscape design by Harry Sims Bent. The property displays a streamlined Art Moderne appearance with some Art Deco elements, a modern approach and a display of Harry Sims Bent's desire to create a pleasing environment for park users. Contributing features to Mother Waldron Playground include the

²⁸ *Programmatic Agreement Among the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Transit Administration, The Hawaii State Historic Preservation Officer, The United States Navy, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation Regarding the Honolulu High-Capacity Transit Corridor Project in the City and County of Honolulu, Hawaii*, (January 2011).

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remaining original Art Moderne playground site and the streamlined comfort station building. Non-contributing features include an approximately 1.5 acre site which nearly doubled the size of the remaining Mother Waldron Playground original site as well as the former Coral Street area. These non-contributing sites became an extension of Mother Waldron Playground following Halekauwila Street improvements in 1991-1992 and continued Kakaako district improvements made from 1994-1995. Still, the retention of the playground's prominent Bent-designed features, including the zig-zag wall and comfort station, allows Mother Waldron Park to remain eligible under Criterion C.

In addition, the property retains its original historic function. The period of significance for Mother Waldron Playground spans from its construction date in 1937 through 1945, when supervised play largely ceased and Honolulu's Board of Parks and Recreation was formed to rehabilitate Oahu's parks after World War II.

Social History

Mother Waldron Playground is associated with the playground movement across the United States and Honolulu's need for recreational facilities within urban areas. Playgrounds were viewed as a means to reform urban youth and help create law-abiding citizens through structured play.

Entertainment/Recreation

Mother Waldron Playground provided recreational facilities for urban youth. Park employees did not allow children to play freely. Instead, accepted views of recreation at the time required organized play for children to be overseen by a playground director.

Architecture and Landscape Architecture

Mother Waldron Playground is an example of Harry Sims Bent's architecture and landscape architecture work. At the time, Bent acted as the Honolulu Park Board's chief designer, planning parks and playgrounds throughout the 1930s. His Art Moderne with Art Deco designs represented a modern approach for Mother Waldron Playground. Bent's design fulfilled the needs required for "organized play" by dividing the park into two halves for different age groups and also providing a comfort station for users. The park demonstrates Bent's desire to create a functional yet aesthetically pleasing urban playground.

Period of Significance

The period of significance for Mother Waldron Playground spans from 1937, when construction commenced, until 1945, when the playground movement that supported supervised play largely ceased and Honolulu's Board of Parks and Recreation was formed to rehabilitate Oahu's parks following World War II.

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Integrity Evaluation

Mother Waldron Playground retains a moderate level of integrity of location. Original portions of the playground remain in place, but other areas originally associated with the playground are no longer part of the site, and other areas not historically part of the playground have been added. The playground has a low level of integrity of materials, design, and workmanship. Halekauwila Street's realignment and the widening of Pohukaina Street have compromised the park's design, removing over 12,700 square feet of the original park boundaries and demolishing and replacing original features, diminishing the integrity of workmanship and materials. However, although many original features of the park have been removed and replaced, the playground retains a modest amount of original features, including most of the zig-zag wall and the comfort station, to demonstrate a low integrity of materials and workmanship. Mother Waldron Playground does not retain integrity of setting outside of the park; within the park open spaces and a general playground appeal contribute to a moderate level of integrity of setting. The Kakaako area has transitioned over time from a mix-use commercial and residential district to a largely industrial area. Mother Waldron Playground is now surrounded by these industrial uses. Mother Waldron Playground retains its integrity of feeling as an Art Moderne-designed playground and its integrity of association with the early-1900s playground movement. Therefore, the playground retains integrity of feeling and association.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark

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____ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #____
____ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #____
____ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey #____

Primary location of additional data:

____ State Historic Preservation Office
____ Other State agency
____ Federal agency
____ Local government
____ University
____ Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 3.76

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 21.299251 | Longitude: -157.858407 |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☐ NAD 1983

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- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

See Map Attachment

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

Mother Waldron Playground's boundary includes the entire area presently called Mother Waldron Playground. This footprint includes a portion of the original playground, its southeast expansion, and the former Coral Street right-of-way between Halekauwila and Pohukaina streets. Although the playground's size was altered in the 1990s, these changes did not affect the playground's use as a public playground. This boundary corresponds to the boundary concurred to by the Hawaii State Historic Preservation Division in an earlier 2008 eligibility assessment, despite 1990s changes to the playground.

The boundary encompasses all of the remaining original resources and features that comprise the property, as well as more recent additions. The National Register boundary has been prepared in accordance with guidelines established by the National Register Bulletin, "Defining Boundaries for National Register Properties."²⁹

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: G. Blanchard/Cultural Resources Team
organization: Honolulu Authority for Rapid Transportation
street & number: 1099 Alakea Street, 17th Floor
city or town: Honolulu state: Hawaii zip code: 96813
e-mail: _____
telephone: (808) 566-2299
date: 2/1/2013

²⁹ National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin: Defining Boundaries for National Register Properties* (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of the Interior, 1997).

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Additional Documentation

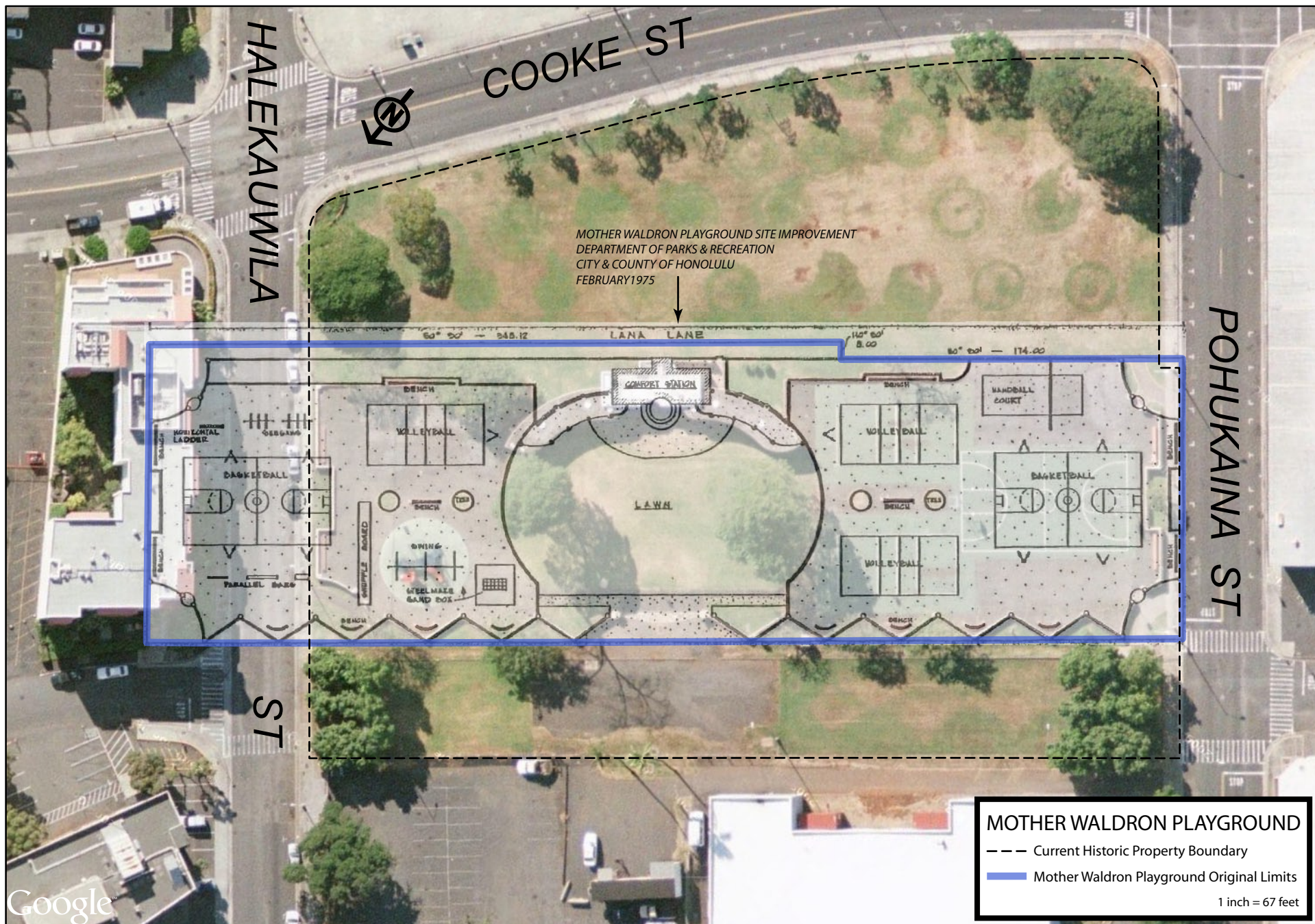
Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)
 - Plan of Mother Waldron Playground, 1973
 - USGS aerial photograph of Mother Waldron Playground and vicinity, 1952

Mother Waldron Playground
Bounded by Coral Street, Halekauwila Street, Pohukaina Street, and Cooke Street
City and County of Honolulu, Hawaii
Hawaii Register of Historic Places, No. 80-14-1388

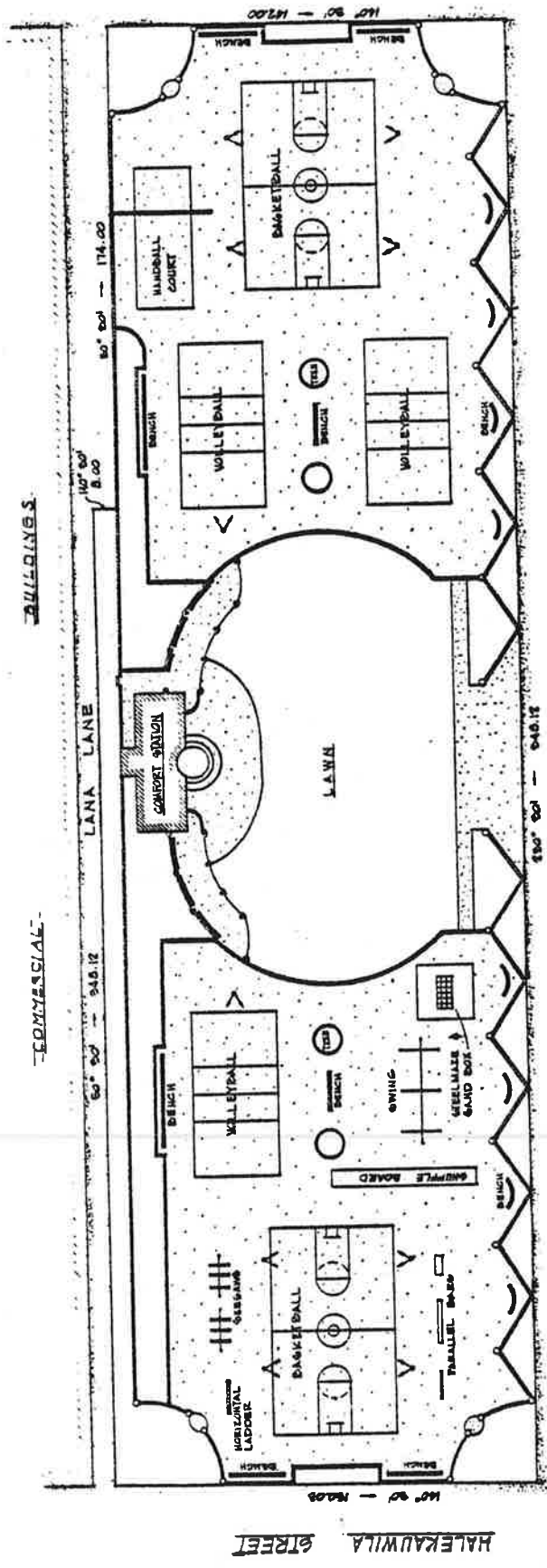
Mother Waldron Playground







COMMERCIAL - BUILDINGS



17204	REPORTED IMPROVEMENTS	SK
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS & RECREATION		
CITY & COUNTY OF HONOLULU		
MOTHER WALDRON PLAYGROUND		
SITE IMPROVEMENT		
DRAWN BY: G.L.	DESIGNED BY: /	DATE: 2/8/75
RECOMMENDED BY:	APPROVED BY:	FILE NO.
REVISIONS	REVISIONS	REVISIONS

0 20 40
SCALE IN FEET

AREA: 1.76 ACRES



USGS aerial photograph of Mother Waldron Playground and vicinity, 1952.

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Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Mother Waldron Playground

City or Vicinity: Honolulu

County: Honolulu

State: Hawaii

Photographer: Charles Greenleaf

Date Photographed: 11/17/2012

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 8. View south toward Mother Waldron Playground from Halekauwila Street and Coral Street into original playground area
- 2 of 8. View north from Pohukaina Street and the former Lana Lane into original playground area
- 3 of 8. View northeast from wall along Pohukaina Street into original playground area
- 4 of 8. View southwest from Halekauwila Street and 1991-1992 expansion area toward original playground area
- 5 of 8. View north from Pohukaina Street toward original playground area and its former handball court
- 6 of 8. View northeast from Pohukaina Street toward original playground area and 1991-1992 expansion area
- 7 of 8. View northeast toward comfort station
- 8 of 8. View east toward comfort station from original playground entrance at Coral Street

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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



Photo 1.



Photo 2.



Photo 3.



Photo 4.



Photo 5.



Photo 6.



Photo 7.



Photo 8.